Listing of Claims:

What is claimed is:

1. (withdrawn) A method implemented on a computer system via a plurality of software modules for managing a workflow process, the method assisting a user with procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in an enterprise regarding one or a plurality of items, and

5   comprising the steps of: discovering, via one or more of the software modules, internal and external data related to at least one item based on user-defined parameters, wherein the discovered internal and external data is extracted from a plurality of data sources internal and external to the enterprise; storing the discovered internal and external data in a data mart; analyzing, via one or more of the software modules, the discovered internal and external data, wherein an assessment is made of the

10   impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the at least one item; and providing to the user, via one or more of the software modules, one or more computer-initiated options for fully or partially executing one or more action(s) with respect to procurement, sourcing or strategic sourcing of the at least one item on behalf of the enterprise.

15

2. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the discovered internal and external data stored in the data mart is organized for querying and report generation, and represented to the user in a plurality of formats.

3. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of producing, via one or more

20   of the software modules, one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data, wherein the one or more reports provide the user with information regarding the impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the at least one item, wherein the reports include information represented and/or displayed in graphical formats.

25

4. (withdrawn) The method of claim 3, wherein the graphical formats of the information include tables, charts, graphs, and/or maps.

5. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of producing, via one or more

2

of the software modules, one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data, wherein the one or more reports provide the user with information regarding the impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the at least one item, wherein the reports include information represented and/or displayed in non-graphical formats.

6. (withdrawn) The method of claim 5, wherein the non-graphical formats of the information include news bulletins, alert boxes, and audio messages.

7. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein functionalities of the workflow process are accessed by the user through one or more software modules with a user interface.

8. (withdrawn) The method of claim 7, wherein the user may select one or more software modules and enter the workflow process at any point in the process, wherein the user controls of the functionalities of the workflow process.

9. (withdrawn) The method of claim 7, wherein the user may select one or more software modules to follow the workflow process, wherein the user is guided through the functionalities of the workflow process.

10. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the system may proactively invoke one or more software modules from the module layer and alert the user to any relevant change(s) that require action(s) based on user-defined parameters.

11. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data assists the user in identifying parameters for criteria relevant to procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing in an enterprise regarding one or a plurality of items.

12. (withdrawn) The method of claim 11, wherein the parameters are user-defined.

13. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data uses data from the step of discovering the internal and external data to produce one or more reports intended to assist the user in procurement decisions, sourcing decisions, and/or strategic sourcing decisions.

14. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data uses data from the step of discovering the internal and external data to make recommendations for possible actions based on the discovered internal and external data.

15. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data collects data from the step of discovering the internal and external data related to the at least one item based on user-defined parameters and additional data from user input to make recommendations in real time.

16. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of executing one or more actions uses data from the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data as input for the user to decide which recommendations to execute and when to execute them.

17. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data collects, integrates and displays graphical and non-graphical data.

18. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data includes identifying and establishing rules, notices, and alerts, which are customized according to user-defined criteria.

19. (withdrawn) The method of claim 18, wherein the alerts may be specified by a user by either defining the customizable conditions that trigger the alert or by selecting and/or further specifying alerts from a list of alerts that the system presents to the user via a user interface.

20. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data

4

includes extraction, transformation and loading of data, and also scanning of data that has been aggregated across a single business unit or across multiple business units of the same enterprise, conducting of real-time searching, and customizing of real-time alerts and news feeds.

21. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data performs quantitative and qualitative analysis on the discovered data.

22. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data implements a plurality of data and analysis tools.

23. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data includes risk analysis, data visualization, and/or 'what if' scenarios.

24.(withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data includes making one or more recommendations based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data and displaying the data via one or more generated reports and/or a user interface.

25. (withdrawn) The method of claim 24, wherein the one or more recommendations enable the user to define priorities, set parameters, and optimize data outputs.

26. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data includes selecting parameters from the one or more user-defined parameters, selecting values, value ranges, and/or conditions for the selected one or more user-defined parameters, establishing weight(s) or relative weight(s) for the selected one or more user-defined parameters, and/or prioritizing weight(s) or relative weight(s) for the selected one or more user-defined parameters.

27. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of executing one or more actions enables the user to set automation levels at either a first level, which provides a greater range of permitted automated actions, or at a second level, which provides a more restricted range of permitted

automated actions.

28. (withdrawn) The method of claim 27, wherein the additional automation levels may be selected, providing a plurality of customized ranges of permitted automated actions.

29. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of executing one or more actions provides agents that follow user-defined rules to enable hands-free handling of user-defined exceptions and processes.

30. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of executing one or more actions initiates a transaction via another application, carries out one or a plurality of transactions, and/or changes information in an application.

31. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of executing one or more actions includes providing agents that follow user-defined rules to enable hands-free handling of user-defined exceptions and processes, initiating a transaction via another application, carrying out certain transactions, wherein the certain transactions include generating and sending out a RFQ, and/or changing discovered internal and external data in an internal application.

32. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the internal and external data related to at least one item and resulting from the steps in the workflow process are reintegrated into the data mart after each action is processed, wherein the data are continuously incorporated into the data mart automatically or at predetermined or other intervals.

33. (withdrawn) The method of claim 3, further comprising, after the step of producing one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data, the step of recommending to the user, via one or more of the software modules, one or more proposed actions with respect to the procurement, sourcing and strategic sourcing of the at least one item on behalf of the enterprise based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data.

34. (withdrawn) The method of claim 5, further comprising, after the step of producing one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data, the step of recommending to the user, via one or more of the software modules, one or more proposed actions with respect to the procurement, sourcing and strategic sourcing of the at least one item on behalf of the enterprise based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data.

35. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the software modules are implemented in accordance with the steps of the workflow process.

36. (withdrawn) The method of claim 35, wherein a first action of the workflow process inputs data into one or more of the software modules, wherein one or more software modules processing a second action of the workflow process access the data input by the first action, wherein the data input by the first action are automatically incorporated in the workflow process and made available to the one or more software modules processing the second action.

37. (withdrawn) The method of claim 36, wherein the data are the result of user input.

38. (withdrawn) The method of claim 36, wherein the data are the result of system input.

39. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more software modules automatically incorporate the discovered internal and external data and/or data produced by the analysis of the discovered internal and external data resulting from one or more previous actions and/or steps in the workflow process into a next invocation of the one or more software modules.

40. (withdrawn) The method of claim 39, wherein the data are the result of user input.

41. (withdrawn) The method of claim 39, wherein the data are the result of system input.

42. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more software modules alert the user of conditions that meet the parameters set by the user and are relevant to the user's tasks in

procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing.

43. (withdrawn) The method of claim 42, wherein the conditions include values, combinations of values, and conditions for the values and combinations of values.

44. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more software modules are automatically invoked with partial or complete instantiation, wherein the partial or complete instantiation specifies all or part of the user input for performing a task with a software module, wherein the invocation and instantiation are the result of one or more alerts that have been triggered, or one or more events that the computer system determines merit invocation of one or more software modules.

45. (withdrawn) The method of claim 44, wherein the invocation of the one or more software modules occurs with or without instantiation and is accompanied by a representation of an alert or plurality of alerts that caused the module to be invoked.

46. (withdrawn) The method of claim 44, wherein the invocation of a module or plurality of modules with or without instantiation occurs and is accompanied by a representation of the steps that caused the module to be invoked.

47. (withdrawn) A method implemented on a computer system via a plurality of software modules for managing a workflow process, the method assisting a user with procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in an enterprise regarding one or a plurality of items, and comprising the steps of: discovering, via one or more of the software modules, internal and external data related to at least one item based on user-defined parameters, wherein the discovered internal and external data is extracted from a plurality of data sources internal and external to the enterprise; storing the discovered internal and external data in a data mart; analyzing, via one or more of the software modules, the discovered internal and external data, wherein an assessment is made of the impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the at least one

item; recommending to the user, via one or more of the software modules, one or more proposed actions with respect to procurement, sourcing or strategic sourcing of the at least one item on behalf of the enterprise based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data; and providing to the user, via one or more of the software modules, one or more computer-initiated options for fully or partially executing one or more action(s) with respect to the procurement, sourcing or strategic sourcing of the at least one item on behalf of the enterprise.

48. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the discovered internal and external data stored in the data mart is organized for querying and report generation, and represented to the user in a plurality of formats.

49. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, further comprising the step of producing, via one or more of the software modules, one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data, wherein the one or more reports provide the user with information regarding the impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the at least one item, wherein the reports include information represented and/or displayed in graphical formats.

50. (withdrawn) The method of claim 49, wherein the graphical formats of the information include tables, charts, graphs, and/or maps.

51. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, further comprising the step of producing, via one or more of the software modules, one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data, wherein the one or more reports provide the user with information regarding the impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the at least one item, wherein the reports include information represented and/or displayed in non-graphical formats.

52. (withdrawn) The method of claim 51, wherein the non-graphical formats of the information include news bulletins, alert boxes, and audio messages.

9

53. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein functionalities of the workflow process are accessed by the user through one or more software modules with a user interface.

54. (withdrawn) The method of claim 53, wherein the user may select one or more software modules and enter the workflow process at any point in the process, wherein the user controls of the functionalities of the workflow process.

55. (withdrawn) The method of claim 54, wherein the user may select one or more software modules to follow the workflow process, wherein the user is guided through the functionalities of the workflow process.

56. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the system may proactively invoke one or more software modules from the module layer and alert the user to any relevant change(s) that require action(s) based on user-defined parameters.

57. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data assists the user in identifying parameters for criteria relevant to procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing in an enterprise regarding one or a plurality of items.

58. (withdrawn) The method of claim 57, wherein the parameters are user-defined.

59. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data uses data from the step of discovering the internal and external data to produce one or more reports intended to assist the user in procurement decisions, sourcing decisions, and/or strategic sourcing decisions.

60. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of recommending to the user one or more proposed actions uses data from the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data to make recommendations for possible actions based on the discovered internal and external data.

10

61. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data collects data from the step of discovering the internal and external data related to the at least one item based on user-defined parameters and additional data from user input to make recommendations in real time.

62. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of executing one or more actions uses data from the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data as input for the user to decide which recommendations to execute and when to execute them.

63. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data collects, integrates and displays graphical and non-graphical data.

64. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data includes identifying and establishing rules, notices, and alerts, which are customized according to user-defined criteria.

65. (withdrawn) The method of claim 64, wherein the alerts may be specified by a user by either defining the customizable conditions that trigger the alert or by selecting and/or further specifying alerts from a list of alerts that the system presents to the user via a user interface.

66. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data includes extraction, transformation and loading of data, and also scanning of data that has been aggregated across a single business unit or across multiple business units of the same enterprise, conducting of real-time searching, and customizing of real-time alerts and news feeds.

67. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data performs quantitative and qualitative analysis on the discovered data.

68. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and

11

external data implements a plurality of data and analysis tools.

69. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data includes risk analysis, data visualization, and/or `what if` scenarios.

70. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data includes making one or more recommendations based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data and displaying the data via one or more generated reports and/or a user interface.

71. (withdrawn) The method of claim 70, wherein the one or more recommendations enable the user to define priorities, set parameters, and optimize data outputs.

72. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data includes selecting parameters from the one or more user-defined parameters, selecting values, value ranges, and/or conditions for the selected one or more user-defined parameters, establishing weight(s) or relative weight(s) for the selected one or more user-defined parameters, and/or prioritizing weight(s) or relative weight(s) for the selected one or more user-defined parameters.

73. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of executing one or more actions enables the user to set automation levels at either a first level, which provides a greater range of permitted automated actions, or at a second level, which provides a more restricted range of permitted automated actions.

74. (withdrawn) The method of claim 73, wherein the additional automation levels maybe selected, providing a plurality of customized ranges of permitted automated actions.

75. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of executing one or more actions provides agents that follow user-defined rules to enable hands-free handling of user-defined exceptions and processes.

76. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of executing one or more actions initiates a transaction via another application, carries out one or a plurality of transactions, and/or changes information in an application.

77. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of executing one or more actions includes providing agents that follow user-defined rules to enable hands-free handling of user-defined exceptions and processes, initiating a transaction via another application, carrying out certain transactions, wherein the certain transactions include generating and sending out a RFQ, and/or changing discovered internal and external data in an internal application.

78. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the internal and external data related to at least one item and resulting from the steps in the workflow process are reintegrated into the data mart after each action is processed, wherein the data are continuously incorporated into the data mart automatically or at predetermined or other intervals.

79. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the software modules are implemented in accordance with the steps of the workflow process.

80. (withdrawn) The method of claim 79, wherein a first action of the workflow process inputs data into one or more of the software modules, wherein one or more software modules processing a second action of the workflow process access the data input by the first action, wherein the data input by the first action are automatically incorporated in the workflow process and made available to the one or more software modules processing the second action.

81. (withdrawn) The method of claim 80, wherein the data are the result of user input.

82. (withdrawn) The method of claim 80, wherein the data are the result of system input.

83. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the one or more software modules automatically

13

incorporate the discovered internal and external data and/or data produced by the analysis of the discovered internal and external data resulting from one or more previous actions and/or steps in the workflow process into a next invocation of the one or more software modules.

84. (withdrawn) The method of claim 83, wherein the data are the result of user input.

85. (withdrawn) The method of claim 83, wherein the data are the result of system input.

86. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the one or more software modules alert the user of conditions that meet the parameters set by the user and are relevant to the user's tasks in procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing.

87. (withdrawn) The method of claim 86, wherein the conditions include values, combinations of values, and conditions for the values and combinations of values.

88. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, wherein the one or more software modules are automatically invoked with partial or complete instantiation, wherein the partial or complete instantiation specifies all or part of the user input for performing a task with a software module, wherein the invocation and instantiation are the result of one or more alerts that have been triggered, or one or more events that the computer system determines merit invocation of one or more software modules.

89. (withdrawn) The method of claim 88, wherein the invocation of the one or more software modules occurs with or without instantiation and is accompanied by a representation of an alert or plurality of alerts that caused the module to be invoked.

90. (withdrawn) The method of claim 88, wherein the invocation of a module or plurality of modules with or without instantiation occurs and is accompanied by a representation of the steps that caused the module to be invoked.

91. (withdrawn) A method implemented on a computer system via a plurality of software modules for managing a workflow process, the method assisting a user with procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in an enterprise regarding one or a plurality of items, and comprising the steps of: discovering, via one or more of the software modules, internal and external data related to at least one item based on user-defined parameters, wherein the discovered internal and external data is extracted from a plurality of data sources internal and external to the enterprise; storing the discovered internal and external data in a data mart; identifying, via one or more of the software modules, one or more conditions related to the at least one item or related to procurement, sourcing, and strategic sourcing in the enterprise of the at least one item; if at least one of the one or more conditions is satisfied, generating, via one or more of the software modules, at least one alert for the user; analyzing, via one or more of the software modules, the discovered internal and external data, wherein an assessment is made of the impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the at least one item; and providing to the user, via one or more of the software modules, one or more computer-initiated options for fully or partially executing one or more action(s) with respect to the procurement, sourcing or strategic sourcing of the at least one item on behalf of the enterprise.

92. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the discovered internal and external data stored in the data mart is organized for querying and report generation, and represented to the user in a plurality of formats.

93. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, further comprising the step of producing, via one or more of the software modules, one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data, wherein the one or more reports provide the user with information regarding the impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the at least one item, wherein the reports include information represented and/or displayed in graphical formats.

94. (withdrawn) The method of claim 93, wherein the graphical formats of the information include

15

tables, charts, graphs, and/or maps.

95. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, further comprising the step of producing, via one or more of the software modules, one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data, wherein the one or more reports provide the user with information regarding the impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the at least one item, wherein the reports include information represented and/or displayed in non-graphical formats.

96. (withdrawn) The method of claim 95, wherein the non-graphical formats of the information include news bulletins, alert boxes, and audio messages.

97. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein functionalities of the workflow process are accessed by the user through one or more software modules with a user interface.

98. (withdrawn) The method of claim 97, wherein the user may select one or more software modules and enter the workflow process at any point in the process, wherein the user may have control of the functionalities of the workflow process.

99. (withdrawn) The method of claim 97, wherein the user may select one or more software modules to follow the workflow process, wherein the user is guided through the functionalities of the workflow process.

100. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the system may proactively invoke one or more software modules from the module layer and alert the user to any relevant change(s) that require action(s) based on user-defined parameters.

101. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data assists the user in identifying parameters for criteria relevant to procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing in an enterprise regarding one or a plurality of items.

102. (withdrawn) The method of claim 101, wherein the parameters are user-defined.

103. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of identifying one or more conditions related to the at least one item assists the user in specifying conditions that will trigger an alert.

104. (withdrawn) The method of claim 103, wherein the conditions that will trigger an alert are user-defined.

105. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of generating at least one alert for the user may be executed automatically, after the user's approval or after the approval of one or more actions.

106. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data uses data from the step of discovering the internal and external data and the step of identifying one or more conditions related to the at least one item to produce one or more reports intended to assist the user in procurement decisions, sourcing decisions, and/or strategic sourcing decisions.

107. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data uses data from the step of discovering the internal and external data to make recommendations for possible actions based on the discovered internal and external data.

108. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data collects data from the step of discovering the internal and external data related to the at least one item based on user-defined parameters and additional data from user input to make recommendations in real time.

109. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of executing one or more actions uses data from the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data as input for the user to decide which recommendations to execute and when to execute them.

17

110. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data collects, integrates and displays graphical and non-graphical data.

111. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of identifying one or more conditions related to the at least one item includes identifying and establishing rules, notices, and alerts, which are customized according to user-defined criteria.

112. (withdrawn) The method of claim 111, wherein the alerts may be specified by a user by either defining the customizable conditions that trigger the alert or by selecting and/or further specifying alerts from a list of alerts that the system presents to the user via a user interface.

113. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data includes extraction, transformation and loading of data, and also scanning of data that has been aggregated across a single business unit or across multiple business units of the same enterprise, conducting of real-time searching, and customizing of real-time alerts and news feeds.

114. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data performs quantitative and qualitative analysis on the discovered data.

115. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data implements a plurality of data and analysis tools.

116. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data includes risk analysis, data visualization, and/or `what if`, scenarios.

117. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data includes making one or more recommendations based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data and displaying the data via one or more generated reports and/or a user interface.

118. (withdrawn) The method of claim 117, wherein the one or more recommendations enable the user to define priorities, set parameters, and optimize data outputs.

119. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data includes selecting parameters from the one or more user-defined parameters, selecting values, value ranges, and/or conditions for the selected one or more user-defined parameters, establishing weight(s) or relative weight(s) for the selected one or more user-defined parameters, and/or prioritizing weight(s) or relative weight(s) for the selected one or more user-defined parameters.

120. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of executing one or more actions enables the user to set automation levels at either a first level, which provides a greater range of permitted automated actions, or at a second level, which provides a more restricted range of permitted automated actions.

121. (withdrawn) The method of claim 120, wherein the additional automation levels may be selected, providing a plurality of customized ranges of permitted automated actions.

122. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of executing one or more actions provides agents that follow user-defined rules to enable hands-free handling of user-defined exceptions and processes.

123. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of executing one or more actions initiates a transaction via another application, carries out one or a plurality of transactions, and/or changes information in an application.

124. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the step of executing one or more actions includes providing agents that follow user-defined rules to enable hands-free handling of user-defined exceptions and processes, initiating a transaction via another application, carrying out certain transactions, wherein the certain transactions include generating and sending out a RFQ,

19

and/or changing discovered internal and external data in an internal application.

125. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the internal and external data related to at least one item and resulting from the steps in the workflow process are reintegrated into the data mart after each action is processed, wherein the data are continuously incorporated into the data mart automatically or at predetermined or other intervals.

126. (withdrawn) The method of claim 93, further comprising, after the step of producing one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data, the step of recommending to the user, via one or more of the software modules, one or more proposed actions with respect to the procurement, sourcing and strategic sourcing of the at least one item on behalf of the enterprise based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data.

127. (withdrawn) The method of claim 95, further comprising, after the step of producing one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data, the step of recommending to the user, via one or more of the software modules, one or more proposed actions with respect to the procurement, sourcing and strategic sourcing of the at least one item on behalf of the enterprise based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data.

128. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the software modules are implemented in accordance with the steps of the workflow process.

129. (withdrawn) The method of claim 128, wherein a first action of the workflow process inputs data into one or more of the software modules, wherein one or more software modules processing a second action of the workflow process access the data input by the first action, wherein the data input by the first action are automatically incorporated in the workflow process and made available to the one or more software modules processing the second action.

130. (withdrawn) The method of claim 129, wherein the data are the result of user input.

131. (withdrawn) The method of claim 129, wherein the data are the result of system input.

132. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the one or more software modules automatically incorporate the discovered internal and external data and/or data produced by the analysis of the discovered internal and external data resulting from one or more previous actions and/or steps in the workflow process into a next invocation of the one or more software modules.

133. (withdrawn) The method of claim 132, wherein the data are the result of user input.

134. (withdrawn) The method of claim 132, wherein the data are the result of system input.

135. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the one or more software modules alert the user of conditions that meet the parameters set by the user and are relevant to the user's tasks in procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing.

136. (withdrawn) The method of claim 135, wherein the conditions include values, combinations of values, and conditions for the values and combinations of values.

137. (withdrawn) The method of claim 91, wherein the one or more software modules are automatically invoked with partial or complete instantiation, wherein the partial or complete instantiation specifics all or part of the user input for performing a task with a software module, wherein the invocation and instantiation are the result of one or more alerts that have been triggered, or one or more events that the computer system determines merit invocation of one or more software modules.

138. (withdrawn) The method of claim 137, wherein the invocation of the one or more software modules occurs with or without instantiation and is accompanied by a representation of an alert or plurality of alerts that caused the module to be invoked.

139. (withdrawn) The method of claim 137, wherein the invocation of a module or plurality of

modules with or without instantiation occurs and is accompanied by a representation of the steps that caused the module to be invoked.

140. (previously presented) A method implemented on a computer system via a plurality of software modules for managing a workflow process, the method assisting a user with procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in an enterprise regarding one or a plurality of items, and comprising the steps of: discovering, via one or more of the software modules, internal and external data related to at least one item based on user-defined parameters, wherein the discovered internal and external data is extracted from a plurality of data sources internal and external to the enterprise; storing the discovered internal and external data in a data mart; identifying, via one or more of the software modules, one or more conditions related to the at least one item or related to procurement, sourcing, and strategic sourcing in the enterprise of the at least one item; if at least one of the one or more conditions is satisfied, generating, via one or more of the software modules, at least one alert for the user; analyzing, via one or more of the software modules, the discovered internal and external data, wherein an assessment is made of the impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the at least one item; recommending to the user, via one or more of the software modules, one or more proposed actions with respect to the procurement, sourcing or strategic sourcing of the at least one item on behalf of the enterprise based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data; and providing to the user, via one or more of the software modules, one or more computers-initiated options for fully or partially executing one or more action(s) with respect to the procurement, sourcing or strategic sourcing of the at least one item on behalf of the enterprise.

141. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the discovered internal and external data stored in the data mart is organized for querying and report generation, and represented to the user in a plurality of formats.

142. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, further comprising the step of producing, via one or more of the software modules, one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered

22

internal and external data, wherein the one or more reports provide the user with information regarding the impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the at least one item, wherein the reports include information represented and/or displayed in graphical formats.

143. (previously presented) The method of claim 142, wherein the graphical formats of the information include tables, charts, graphs, and/or maps.

144. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, further comprising the step of producing, via one or more of the software modules, one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data, wherein the one or more reports provide the user with information regarding the impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the at least one item, wherein the reports include information represented and/or displayed in non-graphical formats.

145. (previously presented) The method of claim 144, wherein the non-graphical formats of the information include news bulletins, alert boxes, and audio messages.

146. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein functionalities of the workflow process are accessed by the user through one or more software modules with a user interface.

147. (previously presented) The method of claim 146, wherein the user may select one or more software modules and enter the workflow process at any point in the process, wherein the user may have control of the functionalities of the workflow process.

148. (previously presented) The method of claim 146, wherein the user may select one or more software modules to follow the workflow process, wherein the user is guided through the functionalities of the workflow process.

23

149. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the system may proactively invoke one or more software modules from the module layer and alert the user to any relevant change(s) that require action(s) based on user-defined parameters.

150. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data assists the user in identifying parameters for criteria relevant to procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing in an enterprise regarding one or a plurality of items.

151. (previously presented) The method of claim 150, wherein the parameters are user-defined.

152. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of identifying one or more conditions related to the at least one item assists the user in specifying conditions that will trigger an alert.

153. (previously presented) The method of claim 152, wherein the conditions that will trigger an alert are user-defined.

154. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of generating at least one alert for the user may be executed automatically, after the user's approval or after the approval of one or more actions.

155. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data uses data from the step of discovering the internal and external data and the step of identifying one or more conditions related to the at least one item to produce one or more reports intended to assist the user in procurement decisions, sourcing decisions, and/or strategic sourcing decisions.

156. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of recommending to the user one or more proposed actions uses data from the step of analyzing the discovered internal and

external data to make recommendations for possible actions based on the discovered internal and external data.

157. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data collects data from the step of discovering the internal and external data related to the at least one item based on user-defined parameters and additional data from user input to make recommendations in real time.

158. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of executing one or more actions uses data from the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data as input for the user to decide which recommendations to execute and when to execute them.

159. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data collects, integrates and displays graphical and non-graphical data.

160. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of identifying one or more conditions related to the at least one item includes identifying and establishing rules, notices, and alerts, which are customized according to user-defined criteria.

161. (previously presented) The method of claim 160, wherein the alerts may be specified by a user by either defining the customizable conditions that trigger the alert or by selecting and/or further specifying alerts from a list of alerts that the system presents to the user via a user interface.

162. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data includes extraction, transformation and loading of data, and also scanning of data that has been aggregated across a single business unit or across multiple business units of the same enterprise, conducting of real-time searching, and customizing of real-time alerts and news feeds.

163. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data performs quantitative and qualitative analysis on the discovered data.

164. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data implements a plurality of data and analysis tools.

165. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data includes risk analysis, data visualization, and/or 'what if', scenarios.

166. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data includes making one or more recommendations based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data and displaying the data via one or more generated reports and/or a user interface.

167. (previously presented) The method of claim 166, wherein the one or more recommendations enable the user to define priorities, set parameters, and optimize data outputs.

168. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data includes selecting parameters from the one or more user-defined parameters, selecting values, value ranges, and/or conditions for the selected one or more user-defined parameters, establishing weight(s) or relative weight(s) for the selected one or more user-defined parameters, and/or prioritizing weight(s) or relative weight(s) for the selected one or more user-defined parameters.

169. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of executing one or more actions enables the user to set automation levels at either a first level, which provides a greater range of permitted automated actions, or at a second level, which provides a more restricted range of permitted automated actions.

170. (previously presented) The method of claim 169, wherein the additional automation levels may be selected, providing a plurality of customized ranges of permitted automated actions.

171. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of executing one or more actions provides agents that follow user-defined rules to enable hands-free handling of user-defined exceptions and processes.

172. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of executing one or more actions initiates a transaction via another application, carries out one or a plurality of transactions, and/or changes information in an application.

173. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of executing one or more actions includes providing agents that follow user-defined rules to enable hands-free handling of user-defined exceptions and processes, initiating a transaction via another application, carrying out certain transactions, wherein the certain transactions include generating and sending out a RFQ, and/or changing discovered internal and external data in an internal application.

174. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the internal and external data related to at least one item and resulting from the steps in the workflow process are reintegrated into the data mart after each action is processed, wherein the data are continuously incorporated into the data mart automatically or at predetermined or other intervals.

175. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the software modules are implemented in accordance with the steps of the workflow process.

176. (previously presented) The method of claim 175, wherein a first action of the workflow process inputs data into one or more of the software modules, wherein one or more software modules processing a second action of the workflow process access the data input by the first action, wherein the data input by the first action are automatically incorporated in the workflow process and made available to the one or more software modules processing the second action.

177. (previously presented) The method of claim 176, wherein the data are the result of user input.

178. (previously presented) The method of claim 176, wherein the data are the result of system input.

179. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the one or more software modules automatically incorporate the discovered internal and external data and/or data produced by the analysis of the discovered internal and external data resulting from one or more previous actions and/or steps in the workflow process into a next invocation of the one or more software modules.

180. (previously presented) The method of claim 179, wherein the data are the result of user input.

181. (previously presented) The method of claim 179, wherein the data are the result of system input.

182. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the one or more software modules alert the user of conditions that meet the parameters set by the user and are relevant to the user's tasks in procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing.

183. (previously presented) The method of claim 182, wherein the conditions include values, combinations of values, and conditions for the values and combinations of values.

184. (previously presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the one or more software modules are automatically invoked with partial or complete instantiation, wherein the partial or complete instantiation specifies all or part of the user input for performing a task with a software module, wherein the invocation and instantiation are the result of one or more alerts that have been triggered, or one or more events that the computer system determines merit invocation of one or more software modules.

185. (previously presented) The method of claim 184, wherein the invocation of the one or more software modules occurs with or without instantiation and is accompanied by a representation of an alert or plurality of alerts that caused the module to be invoked.

186. (previously presented) The method of claim 184, wherein the invocation of a module or

plurality of modules with or without instantiation occurs and is accompanied by a representation of the steps that caused the module to be invoked.

187. (withdrawn) A method implemented on a computer system via a plurality of software modules for managing a workflow process, the method assisting a user with procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in an enterprise regarding one or a plurality of items, and comprising the steps of: discovering, via one or more of the software modules, internal and external data related to at least one item based on user-defined parameters, wherein the discovered internal and external data is extracted from a plurality of data sources internal and external to the enterprise; storing the discovered internal and external data in a data mart; analyzing, via one or more of the software modules, the discovered internal and external data, wherein an assessment is made of the impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the at least one item; and identifying, via one or more of the software modules, one or more conditions related to the at least one item or related to procurement, sourcing, and strategic sourcing in the enterprise of the at least one item; if at least one of the one or more conditions is satisfied, generating, via one or more of the software modules, at least one alert for the user; providing to the user, via one or more of the software modules, one or more computer-initiated options for fully or partially executing one or more action(s) with respect to the procurement, sourcing or strategic sourcing of the at least one item on behalf of the enterprise.

188. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the discovered internal and external data stored in the data mart is organized for querying and report generation, and represented to the user in a plurality of formats.

189. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, further comprising the step of producing, via one or more of the software modules, one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data, wherein the one or more reports provide the user with information regarding the impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the at least one

29

item, wherein the reports include information represented and/or displayed in graphical formats.

190. (withdrawn) The method of claim 189, wherein the graphical formats of the information include tables, charts, graphs, and/or maps.

191. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, further comprising the step of producing, via one or more of the software modules, one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data, wherein the one or more reports provide the user with information regarding the impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the at least one item, wherein the reports include information represented and/or displayed in non-graphical formats.

192. (withdrawn) The method of claim 191, wherein the non-graphical formats of the information include news bulletins, alert boxes, and audio messages.

193. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein functionalities of the workflow process are accessed by the user through one or more software modules with a user interface.

194. (withdrawn) The method of claim 193, wherein the user may select one or more software modules and enter the workflow process at any point in the process, wherein the user may have control of the functionalities of the workflow process.

195. (withdrawn) The method of claim 193, wherein the user may select one or more software modules to follow the workflow process, wherein the user is guided through the functionalities of the workflow process.

196. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the system may proactively invoke one or more software modules from the module layer and alert the user to any relevant change(s) that require action(s) based on user-defined parameters.

197. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data assists the user in identifying parameters for criteria relevant to procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing in an enterprise regarding one or a plurality of items.

198. (withdrawn) The method of claim 197, wherein the parameters are user-defined.

199. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data uses data from the step of discovering the internal and external data and the step of identifying one or more conditions related to the at least one item to produce one or more reports intended to assist the user in procurement decisions, sourcing decisions, and/or strategic sourcing decisions.

200. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data uses data from the step of discovering the internal and external data to make recommendations for possible actions based on the discovered internal and external data.

201. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data collects data from the step of discovering the internal and external data related to the at least one item based on user-defined parameters and additional data from user input to make recommendations in real time.

202. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the step of identifying one or more conditions related to the at least one item assists the user in specifying conditions that will trigger an alert.

203. (withdrawn) The method of claim 202, wherein the conditions that will trigger an alert are user-defined.

204. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the step of generating at least one alert for the user may be executed automatically, after the user's approval or after the approval of one or more actions.

205. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data collects, integrates and displays graphical and non-graphical data.

206. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data includes extraction, transformation and loading of data, and also scanning of data that has been aggregated across a single business unit or across multiple business units of the same enterprise, conducting of real-time searching, and customizing of real-time alerts and news feeds.

207. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data performs quantitative and qualitative analysis on the discovered data.

208. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data implements a plurality of data and analysis tools.

209. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data includes risk analysis, data visualization, and/or `what if` scenarios.

210. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data includes making one or more recommendations based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data and displaying the data via one or more generated reports and/or a user interface.

211. (withdrawn) The method of claim 210, wherein the one or more recommendations enable the user to define priorities, set parameters, and optimize data outputs.

212. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the step of analyzing the discovered internal and external data includes selecting parameters from the one or more user-defined parameters, selecting values, value ranges, and/or conditions for the selected one or more user-defined parameters, establishing weight(s) or relative weight(s) for the selected one or more user-defined parameters, and/or prioritizing weight(s) or relative weight(s) for the selected one or more user-

defined parameters.

213. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the step of identifying one or more conditions related to the at least one item includes identifying and establishing rules, notices, and alerts, which are customized according to user-defined criteria.

214. (withdrawn) The method of claim 213, wherein the alerts may be specified by a user by either defining the customizable conditions that trigger the alert or by selecting and/or further specifying alerts from a list of alerts that the system presents to the user via a user interface.

215. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the internal and external data related to at least one item and resulting from the steps in the workflow process are reintegrated into the data mart after each action is processed, wherein the data are continuously incorporated into the data mart automatically or at predetermined or other intervals.

216. (withdrawn) The method of claim 189, further comprising, after the step of producing one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data, the step of recommending to the user, via one or more of the software modules, one or more proposed actions with respect to the procurement, sourcing and strategic sourcing of the at least one item on behalf of the enterprise based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data.

217. (withdrawn) The method of claim 191, further comprising, after the step of producing one or more reports based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data, the step of recommending to the user, via one or more of the software modules, one or more proposed actions with respect to the procurement, sourcing and strategic sourcing of the at least one item on behalf of the enterprise based on the analysis of the discovered internal and external data.

218. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the software modules are implemented in accordance with the steps of the workflow process.

33

219. (withdrawn) The method of claim 218, wherein a first action of the workflow process inputs data into one or more of the software modules, wherein one or more software modules processing a second action of the workflow process access the data input by the first action, wherein the data input by the first action are automatically incorporated in the workflow process and made available to the one or more software modules processing the second action.

220. (withdrawn) The method of claim 219, wherein the data are the result of user input.

221. (withdrawn) The method of claim 219, wherein the data are the result of system input.

222. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the one or more software modules automatically incorporate the discovered internal and external data and/or data produced by the analysis of the discovered internal and external data resulting from one or more previous actions and/or steps in the workflow process into a next invocation of the one or more software modules.

223. (withdrawn) The method of claim 222, wherein the data are the result of user input.

224. (withdrawn) The method of claim 222, wherein the data are the result of system input.

225. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the one or more software modules alert the user of conditions that meet the parameters set by the user and are relevant to the user's tasks in procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing.

226. (withdrawn) The method of claim 225, wherein the conditions include values, combinations of values, and conditions for the values and combinations of values.

227. (withdrawn) The method of claim 187, wherein the one or more software modules are automatically invoked with partial or complete instantiation, wherein the partial or complete instantiation specifies all or part of the user input for performing a task with a software module, wherein the invocation and instantiation are the result of one or more alerts that have been triggered,

34